

House Resolution No. 2295

Whereas, it is with heavy hearts that the members of the Missouri House of Representatives pause to acknowledge the significant achievements of a life gone by, that of jazz great Claude "Fiddler" Williams, who passed to his eternal reward on April 25, 2004; and

Whereas, born in Muskogee, Oklahoma, on February 22, 1908, Claude Williams started out playing the guitar, mandolin, and bass, and later took up the violin, crediting the great jazz violinist Joe Venuti as a key influence; and

Whereas, Claude Williams arrived in Kansas City in 1928 and found work with Andy Kirk's Clouds of Joy, and eventually settled in Kansas City, a place for musicians from around the country to hone their skills in jam sessions; and

Whereas, Claude Williams played with the big band of Alphonso Trent in the early 1930s, and performed in clubs with Nat King Cole's brother, Eddie, and various Kansas City bands until moving to Michigan in 1940, where he and his friend, George Lee, established a band consisting of common laborers that eventually broke up when several of its members left to join the military; and

Whereas, a musician at night, Claude Williams worked as a welder during the day and dutifully served his country in the United States Naval Reserve during World War II, following which he found work in bands playing blues and jazz in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles before returning to Kansas City in 1952 and starting the Claude Williams Combo in 1953; and

Whereas, in the decades that followed, Claude Williams played in the Broadway Revue "Black and Blue" at the young age of eighty, performed for President Bill Clinton's second inaugural, toured Australia, was the first jazz musician inducted into the Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame, and released "Live at J's, Volumes 1 & 2", which the Village Voice named among the best jazz recordings of the year; and

Whereas, the devoted husband of Blanche Williams, Claude Williams was a talented musician for more than seventy-five years whose performances with Count Basie, Lester Young, and Mary Lou Williams were just a few of the many highlights of his stellar career:

Now, therefore, be it resolved that we, the members of the Missouri House of Representatives, Ninety-second General Assembly, join in paying final tribute to Claude Williams, a remarkable musician and passionate violinist who will be remembered as "one of the best jazz fiddlers in the world"; and

Be it further resolved that the Chief Clerk of the Missouri House of Representatives be instructed to prepare a properly inscribed copy of this resolution for the widow of the late Claude Williams, as an expression of our deepest sympathy.

Offered by _____
Representative Yvonne S. Wilson, Dist. #42

Representative Melba J. Curls, Dist. #41

Representative Sharon Sanders Brooks, Dist. #37

Representative Craig Bland, Dist. #43

I, Catherine L. Hanaway, Speaker of the House of
Representatives, Ninety-second General Assembly, Second

Regular Session, do certify that the above is a true and correct copy of House Resolution No. 2295, adopted April 28, 2004.

Catherine L. Hanaway, Speaker